



ALTAR TO MINERVA FROM BENWELL.

## NOTES.

### 1.—AN ALTAR TO MINERVA FROM BENWELL.

This altar, recently observed at Tynemouth, was unearthed at Benwell Roman fort during building operations on Benwell Park Estate in 1937 or 8. It is of coarse grained sandstone,  $13\frac{1}{2}$  in. in height, with a capital 7 in. by 5 in. The top bears the usual focus and bolsters, whilst capital and base are adorned with well cut mouldings. The jug and patera, symbols of sacrifice, are represented on right and left hand sides respectively; the back is plain. On the small die is the following inscription (plate XXX):—

MINIIRV  
PRIMUS

The script tends to the cursive, two strokes being used for the E in Minerva. Poorly judged spacing in the first line has brought the V almost to the edge of the stone, but it is possible that AE may have appeared ligatured.

As far as can now be ascertained, the altar was found to the north of the barrack blocks.<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to see Primus as a clerk in the *principia* or a craftsman in the forge or workshop on the north side of the *via quintana*. As a patroness of craftsmen and also a deity possessing attributes which might appeal to the staff of the *tabularium*, Minerva is likely to have found a devotee in either building.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, when the site was last excavated in 1937 there were obstacles which prevented the complete excavation of both buildings.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Handbook to the Roman Wall* (11th Ed.), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> See A.A., ser. 4, XXI, 155.

<sup>3</sup> A.A., ser. 4, XIX, 11 and 21.

It is to be hoped that the stone will eventually be added to the Society's collection in the Joint Museum of the University of Durham and this Society.

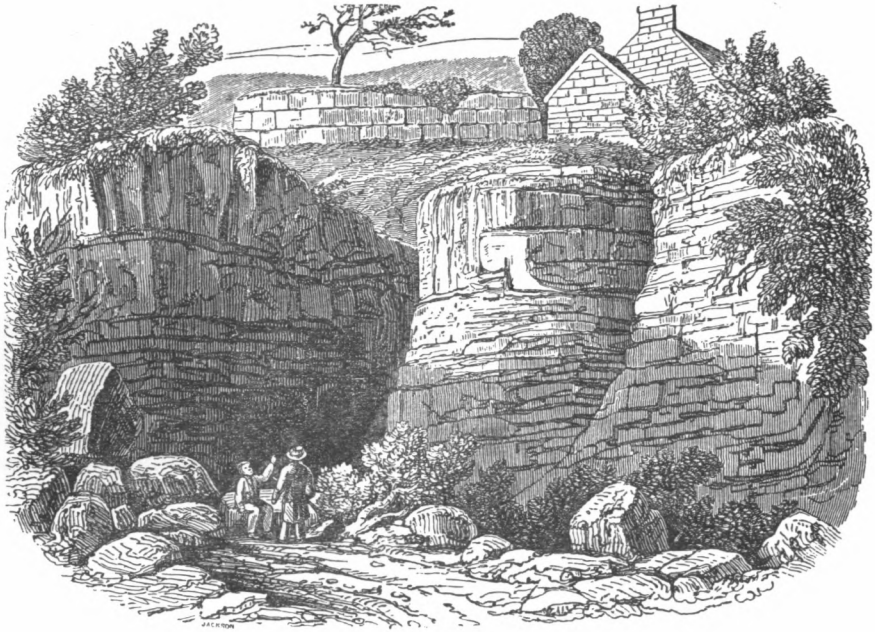
I am most grateful to Mlle Françoise Romaine Bonnet, who is making a study of the cult of Minerva, for two interesting and significant comments on the inscription. In the first place the personal nature of the Benwell altar is in common with the majority of the known inscriptions to Minerva in Britain. On the other hand her name is not preceded on this occasion by the epithet *Dea* which is the most frequent form in this province.

GEORGE JOBEY.

## 2.—THE ROMAN WALL AT DENTON BANK.

In 1926 Parker Brewis gave our Society a short paper to record the purchase by the corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne of the well-known fragment of Hadrian's Wall on Denton Bank (AA<sup>4</sup> iv, 109-112), reproducing three early views of it, and of the aged apple-tree for which it was once celebrated—after Hutton (1802), Richardson (1823) and Bruce (1851): in the first it is apparently flourishing, in the second it is losing a limb, and in the third it has become a lifeless stump. I now reproduce a view of it from the south, entitled "WALL OF SEVERUS, on the Sand-stone Quarries, Denton Dean, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne", which gives it a far more imposing appearance and also, incidentally, offers yet another state of the apple-tree. I have not yet succeeded in tracing the quarto work from the first volume of which this drawing comes; but I have another view from the same book, entitled "WALL OF SEVERUS, NEAR HOUSESTEAD (*sic*), NORTHUMBERLAND", and a full page devoted to woodcuts of three sculptures and one inscribed tombstone "drawn from a large collection of sculptures found in the line of the

Wall of Severus, and preserved in the Newcastle Museum". All these illustrations reappear in the first volume of *Old England: a pictorial museum of national antiquities*, edited by Charles Knight (London, 1864), as nos. 131-136, referred to in the text at p. 43, but in that book each is numbered, and



the text is without footnotes, whereas the illustrations in question come from a book provided with footnotes and they are not numbered.

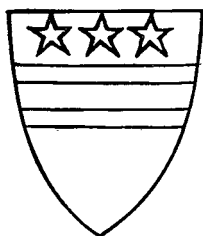
A clue of sorts is provided by the state of the apple-tree. The limb which was drooping to the ground in 1823 has now gone completely, but otherwise it has changed little in shape (when allowance is made for the different angle from which it is shown); by comparison with the other trees in the picture, however, it seems to be almost dead, for most of its branches

are leafless. A date *circa* 1840 seems indicated; I hope that the present note may lead to the identification of the book in which the view was first published, and perhaps also of the artist who drew it.

ERIC BIRLEY.

### 3.—THE NATIONAL FLAG OF THE U.S.A.

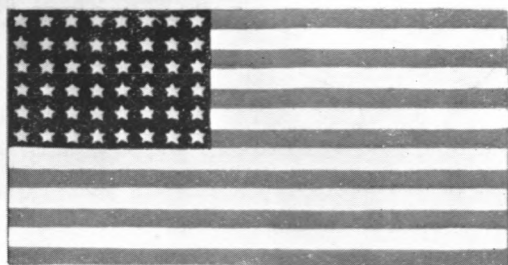
Washington Old Hall recently restored, chiefly by funds raised in the United States, was given to the National Trust in 1956 and let by it on lease to the Washington Urban District Council. In a short account of this, in the *Report* of the National Trust for 1956-7, p. 24, the popular story is repeated that the national flag of U.S.A. is derived from the arms of Washington, which were tendentiously blasoned as "three stars and two stripes", thus making heraldic nonsense of them. The proper blason is *gules two bars and in chief*



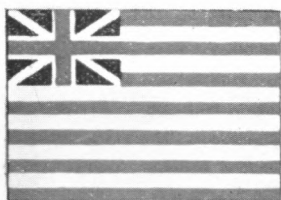
*three molets (spur-rowells) argent.* They first appear on the seal of *William of Wessington* attached to a deed of 1376 wherein he is called *chivaler* (knight). The name was pronounced *Wassington* which later, under the influence of the common word *wash*, became *Washington*. These armorials are first blasoned in *Jenyn's roll* of c. 1410 for—*William de Wessington de gules a deux barrs et*

*3 molettz d'argent au chief.* It is only necessary to compare the drawing in the margin, taken from *William of Wessington's* seal above mentioned, to see how dissimilar they are and to suspect that a different origin is to be sought.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The present writer when, nigh fifty years ago, he catalogued *The Seals in the Treasury of the Dean and Chapter of Durham*, made the same popular suggestion without enquiry, an error of which he has repented a long while ago. See *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd series, vol. XI, where *Wessington* seals are Nos. 2607-2609.



1



2



3



4

1. NATIONAL FLAG OF U.S.A.
2. EAST INDIA CO.'S FLAG.
3. TRIAL FLAG FOR U.S.A.
4. FLAG WITH "NEW CONSTELLATION".



That origin is to be found in the flag of the East India Company, well known in the Colonies in the eighteenth century. This, in its form at that time, consisted of thirteen vertical stripes alternately red and white with the Union, that is the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew combined, upon a blue ground in a canton at the top left hand corner of the flag<sup>2</sup> (plate XXXI, fig. 2). This flag was hoisted as the National Flag by George Washington at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 2nd January, 1776. It was known as the *Union Flag* or the *Grand Union* but perhaps more generally as the *Cambridge* flag. The thirteen stripes on it stood for the union of the thirteen colonies and the "Union" represented allegiance to Great Britain still partially acknowledged. The Union was, however, soon thought to be inappropriate and some change was felt to be necessary. Various experiments were tried (plate XXXI, fig. 3) until finally on 14th August, 1777, Congress resolved "that the flag of the United States of America be thirteen stripes, alternately red and white, and that the Union (i.e. the canton) be thirteen stars white on a blue ground representing a new constellation". These stars were first arrayed in a circle (plate XXXI, fig. 4), a pattern which was not liked and was soon replaced by the stars arrayed in three rows of four, five and four. In fact it was the old flag of the East India Company with the Union in the canton replaced by stars. These, called "a new constellation", do not seem to have any relevance to the spur-rowells of Washington. As new states joined the U.S.A., additional stars were added to the canton until the present number of forty-eight was attained, but the stripes have always remained the thirteen of the original states (plate XXXI, fig. 1).

This account of the origin of the flag is largely taken from *Flags of the World*, by W. J. Jordan, London, 1915. This account seems to be trustworthy and quotes from original documents.

C. H. HUNTER BLAIR.

<sup>2</sup> For earlier forms of this flag see *British Flags*, by W. G. Perrin, plate IX, No. 6, and plate X, No. 11.



## 4.—DEEDS BELONGING TO SIR WILLIAM GIBSON.

*Deposited at the Public Library, Newcastle upon Tyne.  
Part 2.*

These five parcels of deeds form a useful addition to the topographical information on Newcastle upon Tyne available in the Local History Collection at the Public Library. They relate to the following places:—

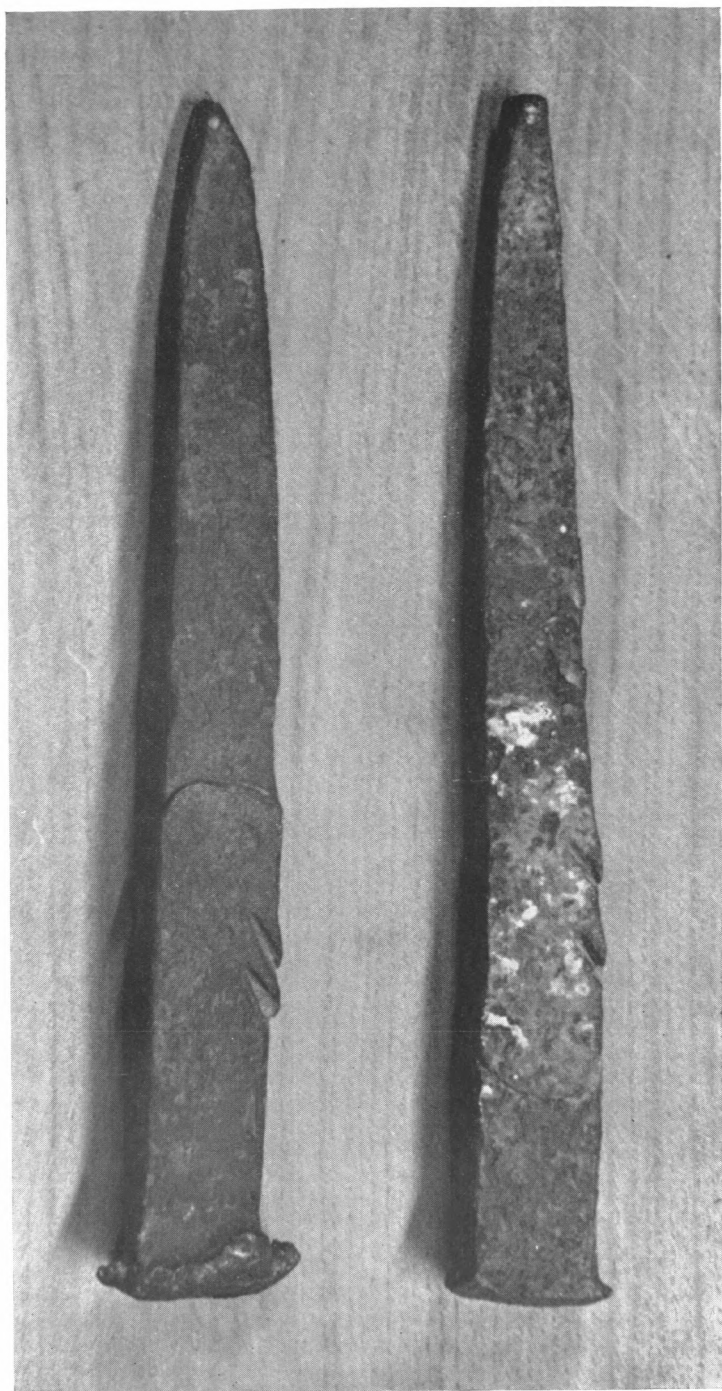
C & G 2/I/1-17	Shieldfield	1844-1863
C & G 2/II/1-21	Quayside	1550-1776
	Fish Shambles Gate, Corbridge	1610
C & G 2/III/1-16	Quayside	1609-1776
	Errington alias Rowcastle Chair	1676
C & G 2/IV/1-4	Quayside	1717
	Backraw	1720
	Haughton, Northumberland	1720
	Parish of Elsdon, Northumberland	1720
	Harbottle, Northumberland	1720
	Sharperton, Northumberland	1720
	Bickerton, Northumberland	1720
	Rothbury, Northumberland	1720
	Alnwick, Northumberland	1720

C & G 2/V/ relates to a tontine scheme for raising £14,000 for the corporation of Newcastle. Subscribers received annuities of £6 for every £100 subscribed, payable quarterly during the lifetime of their nominees.

Other interesting items in this collection include wills—

- 1st Feb., 1673—will of Margaret Morgan of Newcastle, widow (C & G 2/III/12, 13).
- 20th April, 1637—will of Edward Rowcastle of West Matfen, Northumberland (C & G 2/II/17).
- 1st Sept., 1676—will of John Rowcastle of Newcastle, apothecary (C & G 2/III/14).
- 19th July, 1638—will of Thomas Rowcastle of Ovington, Northumberland, yeoman (C & G 2/II/18).
- 12th Feb., 1719/20—will of Rev. John Thomlinson, Rector of Rothbury, clerk (C & G 2/IV/3).





There is one marriage settlement made 27th Sept., 1720, prior to the marriage arranged between Isabell Parcivall of Newcastle and John Cleghorne of Newcastle, cordwainer (C & G 2/IV/4). The will of the Rev. John Thomlinson includes provisions for setting up a school in Rothbury with a master and assistant master who were to teach children of the parish to read English, Latin and Greek, to write, to cast accounts and to know the catechism by heart (C & G 2/IV/3). There are a few extracts from parish registers relating to early seventeenth-century Rowcastles (C & G 2/II/16). Finally there is a copy of Elizabethan letters patent naturalizing Masie Briggs, wife of George Briggs of Scotland (C & G 2/II/6, cf. C & G 1/II/1).

A typescript calendar of these records is available at the Public Library.

E. M. HALCROW.

#### 5.—TWO IRON ROCK WEDGES FROM HADRIAN'S WALL.

In June 1956, I noticed that a small water supply pipe was being laid across the Military Road immediately in front of Planetrees Farm on Brunton Bank. Under the road surface, the trench was being cut through the remains of Hadrian's Wall. Since the workmen stated that the trench had to be filled in again by nightfall, I returned to the site some three hours later and "sat on it" for two hours. During this time the facing stones of the north face of the Wall were exposed and the trench was continued through the rubble and mortar core. The south face was missing, so that I could not measure the width of the Wall, but I do not doubt that it was of the standard narrow gauge at this point.

In the core behind the north facing stones, I found two iron rock splitting wedges embedded. They had not been driven into the core, but obviously had been lying together when wet mortar had accidentally been dumped on top of

them. They measure in length  $10\frac{1}{4}$  and  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches respectively, are made of iron interleaved with slag, and are remarkably well preserved (plate XXXII). On opposite edges they show cut "feathers", the purpose of which was to prevent the wedges from bouncing back out of position when struck by a sledge-hammer. So little corrosion was present that I thought it needless to treat them; one has been cleaned by heating and brushing with a wire brush, while the other has been left exactly as it was removed from the mortar, with traces of mortar still upon it. Both the wedges had been very well used before being lost. They are now in the Joint Museum of Antiquities, King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne.

NOEL SHAW.

#### 6.—A BLACKSMITH'S TOMBSTONE.

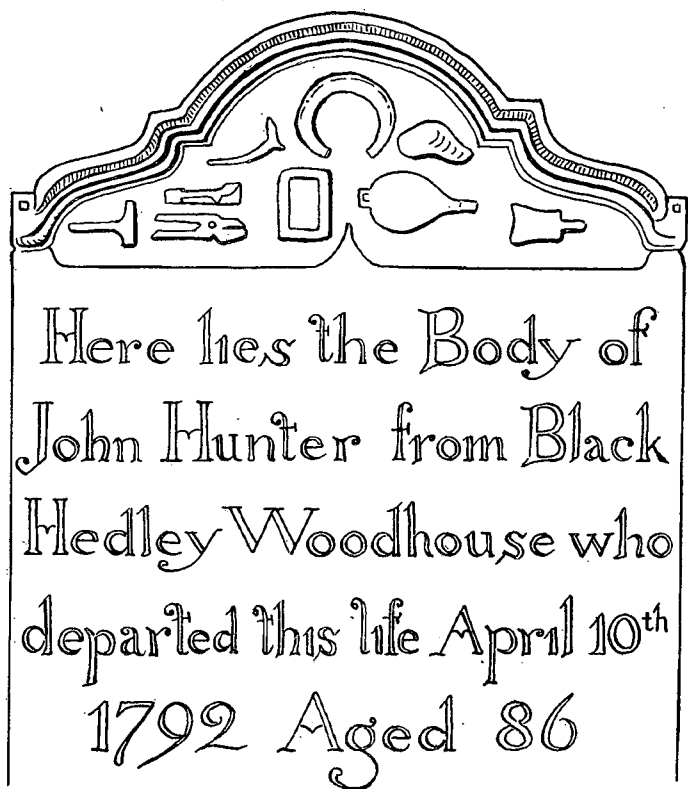
My Anvil and Hammers lies declined  
 My Bellows have quite lost their Wind  
 My Fires extinct my forge decay'd  
 My Vice is in the Dust all laid  
 My Coal is spent my Iron gone  
 My Nails are drove my Work is done  
 My Mortal part rests nigh this stone  
 My Soul to Heaven I hope is gone.

The churchyard on Kilnpit Hill, above Shotley Bridge, contains this memorial to a blacksmith. His name and the emblems of his trade are on one face of the large headstone and the rhyme is on the reverse. This epitaph, with slight variations, was fairly widely used in the eighteenth century, is recorded in published collections<sup>1</sup> and occurs in at least

<sup>1</sup> J. Hackett, *Select and Remarkable Epitaphs*, 1757. T. J. Pettigrew, *Chronicles of the Tombs*, 1878. H. J. Loaring, *Quaint, Curious and Elegant Epitaphs*, 1872. E. R. Suffling, *Epitaphia*, 1909. Briscoe, *Gleanings from God's Acre*, 1901. W. H. Beable, *Epitaphs*, 1925.

fifteen places. The earliest of these is at Blidworth, Notts., in 1713.

Briscoe ascribes the authorship to the poet William Hayley, a friend of Cowper and Southey. But he lived from



1745-1820 and could not therefore have composed the version at Blidworth, nor one at Lincoln dated 1744, recorded by Hackett.

The Vicar of Shotley, the Rev. R. H. Brewis, tells me that John Hunter of Black Hedley has no descendants now living in that parish and there are no other records of him.

D. R. FYSON.

## 7.—THE STANEGATE AT NEWBROUGH.

In the process of cutting a trench, 1 ft. 9 in. wide, for laying a water-main through Newbrough in June and July, 1956, the contractor working for the Hexham Urban District Council encountered the structure of the Roman road called the Stanegate for just over half a mile.

The trench for the main began at Thornton Tower,<sup>1</sup> a quarter of a mile due north of the cross-roads at Newbrough, and at the cross-roads it turned due east. From this point the work slowed down because the mechanical trench-cutter proved unable to tackle the solid Roman road, and manual labour had to be used. Mr. W. W. Outhwaite, Engineer and Surveyor to the Hexham U.D. Council, kindly provided Sir William Gibson with the following report: "The old road was encountered at approximately 2 ft. 0 in. to 2 ft. 6 in. down from the existing road surface and appeared to be made up of a layer of packed cobbles sandwiched between thin layers of sandy gravel, giving a total thickness of approximately 6 to 8 inches." After passing the farm-road leading north to Frankham Farm, the Stanegate, as shown on the 6-inch Ordnance Survey Map,<sup>2</sup> veers a few degrees to the north. The modern road soon begins to turn to the south-east, and the new water-main follows the same course. Sir William Gibson was unfortunately unable to see the work in progress until the contractor had got east of the line beneath which the Stanegate lies, but in the sector where the excavated trench was still open, some thirty yards east of the farm-road to Frankham Farm, there was no evidence for the Roman structure in the clay subsoil.

The present writer is indebted to Sir William Gibson for inspecting the work and obtaining the report which Mr. Outhwaite has kindly provided.

R. P. WRIGHT.

<sup>1</sup> See *Hexham Courant*, 22 June, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> *Northumberland* (new series) N XCI NW.